

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NEA-07 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05
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FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7238

INFO USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY AQGIERS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY BONN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VALLETTA 0208

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, IT, MT,

SUBJECT: ITALIAN/FRENCH DISCUSSIONS WITH MINTOFF

REF: PARIS 4344, VALLETTA 0123,

1. FOLLOWING IS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF CURRENT STATUS
FRENCH/ITALIAN DISCUSSIONS WITH MINTOFF ON LATTER'S AID/
NEUTRALITY PROPOSAL. REPORT IS LIMDIS BECAUSE WE HAVE
BEEN GIVEN INFORMATION IN CONFIDENCE AND ARE NOT SURE
TO WHAT EXTENT OTHERS AMONG EC-9 HAVE YJL BEEN INFORMED.

2. FRENCH AND ITALIAN AMBASSADORS HAVE HAD SEVERAL ROUNDS
OF DISCUSSION WITH GOM, INCLUDING AT LEAST ONE SESSION
WITH MINTOFF, FOLLOWING WHICH TNAY ATTEMPTED TO PUT DOWN
ON PAPER THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT MINTOFF'S PROPOSAL
INVOLVES. THIS THEY HAVE NOW FORWARDED TO PARIS AND ROME
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WITH REQUESTS FOR FUTHER GUIDANCE. BOTH AMBASSADORS SAY
THEIR EFFORT SO FAR HAS BEEN LARGELY LIMITED TO SEEKING
CLARIFICATION OF THE KIND OF POLITICAL FRAMEWORK THAT
MINTOFF ENVISAGES FOR HIS NEUTRALITY CONCEPT, BOTH INSISTING
THAT THEIR GOVERNMENTS COULD NOT POSSIBLY COMMIT THEMSELVES
IN ANY WAY IN RESPECT TO ASSISTANCE UNTIL THEY HAVE
MUCH BETTER IMPRESSION OF THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK.

3. MINTOFF FOR HIS PART HAS BEEN PREDICTABLY IMPATIENT WITH THIS APPROACH, INSISTING THAT HIS FRAMEWORK SHOULD HAVE BEEN CLEAR IN DRAFT TREATY HE CIRCULATED LAST SUMMER AND WHICH HE CONTINUES TO INSIST BOTH LIBYA AND ALGERIA ARE PREPARED TO ENDORSE. AS FRENCH AMBASSADOR PUT IT, MINTOFF HAS SOMETHING TO SELL (I.E. NEUTRALITY) AND HE WANTS TO KNOW NOW WHAT THE WEST WILL PAY FOR IT.

4. DISCUSSIONS TO DATE INDICATE THE FOLLOWING AS TO CONTENT OF MINTOFF'S PROPOSAL:

(A) MALTESE NEUTRALITY WOULD BE "ACTIVE" NEUTRALITY RATHER THAN THE SWISS VARIETY; I.E., MINTOFF SEES THIS AS A FIRST STEP TOWARD GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF HIS CONCEPT OF THE MEDITERRANEAN AS A ZONE OF PEACE.

(B) MALTES NEUTRALITY WOULD GO PARALLEL WITH A POLICY OF NONALIGNMENT.

(C) THE NEUTRALITY GUARANTEES SHOULD BE THE PRODUCT OF NEGOTIATIONS AMONG FRANCE, ITALY, LIBYA, AND ALGERIA, BUT THIS WOULD NOT PRECLUDEMBTHER MEDITERRANEAN STATES PARTICIPATING PROVIDED THESE FOUR PLUS MALTA AGREED.

(D) MALTA WOULD PROVIDE NO MILITARY BASES TO ANYONE AND THERE WOULD BE NO MILITARY FACILITIES AGREEMENTS. THE ONLY UTILIZATION OF EXISTING FACILITIES WOULD
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BE SUCH AS MALTA MIGHT NEED FOR ITS OWN DEFENSE.

(E) EXISTING FIXED UK INSTALLATIONS WOULD BE USED AFTER 1979 FOR CIVILIAN PURPOSES (I.E. THE DOCKYARDS); MOBILE UK FACILITIES SUCH AS RADAR WOULD PRESUMABLY BE REMOVED BY THE BRITISH.

(F) MALTA UNDERTAKES TO PRECLUDE THE PRESENCE ON ITS TERRITORY OF ANY FORCES OF THE U.S. OR THE USSR, INCLUDING ACCESS OF ANY KIND TO NAVAL SHIP REPAIR FACILITIES.

(G) HOWEVER, THERE WOULD BE NO BAR TO OTHER COUNTRIES HAVING OCCASIONAL ACCESS TO THESE SHIP REPAIR FACILITIES IN CASE OF NEED. (MINTOFF REFERRED IN THIS CONTEXT TO THE DOCKYARDS AS MALTA'S ABSOLUTE LIVELIHOOD.)

5. THERE HAS BEEN NO DISCUSSION TO DATE OF SPECIFIC

ASSISTANCE, OTHER THAN MINTOFF INSISTENCE THERE MUST BE AN AID COMMITMENT COINCIDENT WITH GUARANTEES RE NEUTRALITY. MINTOFF HAS MADE CLEAR MALTA WILL LOOK FOR WESTERN ASSISTANCE BEYOND THAT OF ITALY AND FRANCE BUT INSISTS THAT THESE TWO COUNTRIES CANNOT HIDE BEHIND EC-9 IN ORDER TO DELAY MATTERS.

6. ACCORDING TO ITALIAN AMBASSADOR, MINTOFF HAS TAKEN THE LINE THAT IF ITALY AND FRANCE ARE NOT PREPARED TO JOIN IN THESE ARRANGEMENTS, MALTA WOULD CHOOSE NONALIGNED COURSE AND WOULD EXTEND FACILITIES AS NECESSARY WITHIN THAT POLICY FRAMEWORK. HE WAS NOT SO STUPID, MINTOFF IS QUOTED AS SAYING, AS TO EMBARK ON A COURSE OF NEUTRALITY IF HE DID NOT HAVE THE MEANS TO SUPPORT IT. IF FRANCE AND ITALY DID NOT "COME OUT OF THEIR SHELLS" SOON, THERE WAS THIS OPTION OF ACTIVE NONALIGNMENT WITH FULL ARAB WORLD SUPPORT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VALLETTA 0208

LIMDIS

7. THAT IS WHERE MATTERS NOW STAND, ALTHOUGH ITALIAN AMBASSADOR HAS BEEN TOLD BY MINTOFF THAT HE MUST HAVE SOME RESPONSE WITHIN A WEEK BECAUSE OF HIS INTENTION TO VISIT TRIPOLI SHORTLY FOR DISCUSSIONS THERE. BOTH ITALIANS AND FRENCH HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THIS KIND OF TIMETABLE IS TOTALLY UNREALISTIC.

8. COMMENT: BOTH AMBASSADORS ARE FULLY AWARE THEY ARE FACING TYPICAL MINTOFF POKER TACTICS AND THAT THERE IS PERHAPS MORE BLUFF THAN REALITY IN THEM YET. BUT NEITHER IS ENTIRELY SURE HOW SERIOUSLY TO TAKE HIS THREAT TO GO THE ARAB ROUTE OR - IF ONE WERE TO CONCLUDE THAT MINTOFF IS IN FACT SERIOUS - WHEN THEY SHOULD BEGIN TO TAKE HIM SERIOUSLY. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT MINTOFF IS INCREASINGLY CHALLENGED BY THE OPPOSITION - IN THE PRESS AND IN PARLIAMENT - TO BEGIN SHOWING SOME RESULTS FROM WHAT HE PROMISES THAT HIS POLICIES WILL PRODUCE FOR THE POST-1979
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PERIOD. ALL OF US HEAR OCCASIONAL TALK (PROBABLY FROM IDENTICAL SOURCES) THAT MINTOFF IS IN FACT RUNNING SCARED AND THAT RECOGNIZING THE BASIC UNPOPULARITY OF QADHAFI HERE AND THE LIMITS ON WHAT HE MIGHT OFFER MALTA, MINTOFF IS NEEDED GIVING THOUGHT TO MODIFYING NS POSTURE TOWARD THE WEST. BUT THIS WOULD BE A SEA CHANGE FOR MINTOFF FOR WHICH THERE IS STILL NO CONCRETE EVIDENCE IN EITHER WORDS OR ACTION.

9. WE EXPECT WE ARE STILL A GOOD DISTANCE FROM A CRUNCH POINT AND THAT THE FRENCH IN PARTICULAR ARE NOT GOING TO BE PUSHED. THE ITALIANS MAY BE DIFFERENT, PARTICULARLY WITH AN AMBASSADOR WHO THOUGH HARDENED BY EXPERIENCE WITH MINTOFF PROBABLY REMAINS SUSCEPTIBLE TO HIS OWN ARGUMENT THAT ITALY HAS MORE THAN MOST TO LOSE OR GAIN BY WHAT HAPPENS TO MALTA. FOR THEIR PART THE ITALIANS HERE APPEAR TO SHARE THE MINTOFF VIEW EXPRESSED TO THEM THAT THE FRENCH SEE THIS EXERCISE IN LARGE PART AS A MEANS OF ENHANCING THEIR CREDENTIALS WITH THE ARABS BUT HAVE LITTLE INTENTION OF EVER BEING VERY RESPONSIVE ON AID.
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